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ABSTRACT

This study focused on department heads'/ chairs' perceptions of the appraisal interview (a face-to-face interpersonal communication event), assessment of the faculty member's role in the appraisal interview, and assessment of the academic administrator's role in the appraisal interview. The results indicate that approximately 20% of respondents were satisfied with their performance during the appraisal interview, but 80% felt their appraisals were reliable and valid. Department heads/chairs are most likely to use the Problem Solving method and least likely to use the Management by Objective method. Other results are discussed in the paper. (Contains 14 references and 7 tables of data.) (Author/RS)

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Administrators' Perceptions of the Performance Appraisal Interview

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on department heads'/chairs' perceptions of the appraisal interview, assessment of the faculty member's role in the appraisal interview, and assessment of the academic administrator's role in the appraisal interview. The results indicate that approximately 20 percent of respondents were satisfied with their performance during the appraisal interview, but 80 percent felt their appraisals were reliable and valid. Department heads/chairs are most likely to use the Problem Solving method and least likely to use the Management by Objective method. Other results are discussed in the paper.

The performance appraisal interview is a face-to-face interpersonal communication event between an interviewer and an interviewee, a manager and a subordinate, designed to review the subordinate's performance over a period of time by asking and answering questions (McDowell, 1991).

Maier (1966) indicated the performance appraisal has three basic functions:

* To provide adequate feedback to each employee on performance.
* To serve as a basis for modifying or changing behavior toward more effective working habits.
* To provide data to managers with which they may judge future job assignments and composition.

Heneman (1981) indicates that appraisal interviews are anticipated with about as much enthusiasm as death and taxes, cause discomfort and stress., and appear to be the "Achilles heel of most professions." Other research by Campbell (1977) revealed that "thousands of egos and millions of dollars are affected each year by appraisal practices that are usually developed intuitively." Research by Nix (1980) concluded that little, if any, training to conduct evaluation interviews is one of the reasons why most supervisors look with dread to the appraisal interview. Schuler (1981) asserted that the interview is stressful because it is full of uncertainty.

The review of literature, both articles and textbooks, revealed that Maier is quoted most frequently on various methods of performance appraisal. In his book he describes three methods: Tell and Sell, Tell and Listen and Problem Solving. In addition, Donaghy (1984) pointed out that the Management by Objective (MBO) method is used about 50 percent of the time in businesses and industries. Each of these methods is discussed below:

Tell and Sell: The Tell and Sell method is characterized by the supervisor preparing an appraisal, giving it to an employee and trying to convince the employee it is valid. The interviewer attempts to resolve complex issues in a dictatorial, oversimplistic manner, suggesting "do it my way or else."

Tell and Listen: The Tell and Listen method is similar to the Tell and Sell method as the interviewer still plays the role of the judge, but the supervisor encourages disagreement to discover the true feelings of the employee. The interviewee has an opportunity to release defensive feelings, and, thus, some upward communication does occur as the interviewee initiates communication with the supervisor.

Problem Solving: The problem solving method takes the interviewer out of the role of judge to that of a helper, and places emphasis on interviewee development, Erhart (1996), who has written extensively about problem-solving appraisal interviewing, concluded that change is an essential part of business and that participation in change is essential to healthy growth in an organization.

Management by Objectives: The employee who is evaluated by a set of predetermined set of objectives is using the MBO method. The method is designed to help clarify written and oral appraisal duties. Studies by Levinson (1976) and by Lazagna (1971) concluded that the MBO procedure provides individuals with the opportunity to be self-motivated by setting their own objectives. Previous research by McDowell (1986) concluded that academic administrators used the Tell and Sell method and Management by Objectives method (MBO) about 40 percent of the time to access faculty members, have positive perceptions of the appraisal interview process and rated faculty members positively on their communication during the interview.

Although the review of literature revealed that some scientific research has been completed, the review, with the exception of the McDowell study (1986), did not uncover articles focusing on appraisal interviewing in academic settings. Sincoff and Goyer (1984) noted that appraisals in the academic environment are used to access faculty members' effectiveness in teaching, administration, committee service, university governance, student advising and counseling, publications, and professional society participation. Assessment of these areas are used as guides for promotion, tenure and merit pay.

This is an exploratory study designed to discover how administrators (department heads/chairs) perceive faculty members and themselves during the appraisal interview. The study is designed to discover how administrators feel about appraisal interviewing, their level of satisfaction in conducting the interview, their perception of the reliability and validity of their ability to conduct appraisal interviews, the methods they used to conduct the interview, perceptions of their interviewing behavior and perceptions of the interviewee behavior.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Are there significant differences ($p < .05$) between academic administrator gender groups and between academic rank groups in rating faculty members on the following variables: level of satisfaction in conducting the interview, perception of the reliability and validity of the appraisal interview, method/methods used to conduct the interview, perceptions of their interviewing behavior and perceptions of the interviewee behavior?

2. Are there significant differences between academic administrator gender groups and between academic rank groups in rating faculty members/administrators on dimensions of performance appraisal?

PROCEDURES

A sample of 100 department heads/chairs were randomly selected by Central Mailing at a large midwestern university. During the third week of the fall quarter questionnaires were packaged and sent through Central Mailing to the randomly selected members of the sample.

INSTRUMENT

The Appraisal Interview Questionnaire, consisting of three parts, was developed by reviewing several performance instruments.

Evaluation Areas: Part 1 focused on Heads/Chairs formal training in appraisal interviewing, ability to evaluate faculty members, and reliability and validity of their assessment of faculty members. These items were generated by McDowell (1986).

Appraisal Methods: Part 2 was based on a series of conclusions reported in several textbooks and articles (Stano, 1983; Stewart and Cash, 1996; Meyer, Kay, and French, 1965). The items focused on Tell and Sell, Tell and Listen, Problem Solving, and Management by Objective methods and the climate and content of the interview.

Interviewer Perceptions: In Part 3 administrators rated themselves and rated faculty members in terms of how they performed during the appraisal interview.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Means, percentages, chi square analyses, factor analyses were completed on the data.

RESULTS

The results indicate that 67 percent (46 males and 21 females) of the sample responded to the survey. Sixty-three percent of the respondents were full professors. The results, reported in Table 2, reveal that only 13 of the 67 respondents were satisfied with their performance during the appraisal interview, but over 80 percent felt their appraisals were reliable and valid. Table 3 show that respondents are most like to use the problem-solving method and least likely to use the MBO Method. A chi square analysis was completed on all items, and no significant differences occurred between gender groups and rank groups (see Tables 4 and 5). The factor analysis results indicate that 7 items loaded on Factor 1 for the "Evaluation of Administrators" and 4 items loaded on Factor I for the "Interviewee Behavior" factor.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that only 19 percent of the respondents have had training in conducting appraisal interviews and 19 percent are satisfied with their performance, yet over 80 percent feel their appraisal are reliable and valid and 63 percent use a specific evaluation form. These results support previous research (McDowell, 1986). In addition, no significant differences occurred between gender groups and professor groups.

Even though academic heads/chairs do not have formal training in interviewing over 50% use the Problem Solving method and 19 percent use the Tell and Listen method. These are the two methods that Maier suggests that

interviewers use to conduct the appraisal interview. These results do not support McDowell's previous research as 40 percent used the Tell and Sell method and the Management by Objection method. Moreover, in the present study about 20 percent of administrators use the Tell and Sell method which is primarily downward communication.

Over 75 percent of academic administrators communicate evaluation, encourage upward communication, discuss human relations factors, discuss faculty members' teaching performance, discuss current research, and discuss major accomplishments. Because this study was limited to administrators' perceptions of the appraisal process, no information can be stated as to how faculty members feel about administrators' perceptions. In contrast, only 50 percent of administrators feel that faculty members requested help in handling problems and provide information desired on topics, while only 35 percent express an interest in the welfare of the department. Other results, reported in Table 5, show that approximately 40 percent do not discuss problems and solutions to problems and over 30 percent do not have their materials well organized.

The factor analysis results reveal that two factors occurred for both "Heads' Perceptions of Faculty Members" and "Evaluation of Administrators." An interpretation of the results of "Methods and Content" factor indicates that administrators maintain control of the interview by communicating evaluation and discussing teaching, research and service. In addition administrators are concerned about faculty members and thus much time is devoted to human relation factors.

"Faculty Members Role during the Interview Process" is the dominate factor to assess interviewee behaviors. This factor accounts for 43 percent of the variance, and reveals that only about 50 percent of administrators feel that faculty members have a positive attitude about the department and their role in the appraisal interview.

Even thought no significant differences occurred between gender groups and academic rank groups, some statistical findings merit amplification. Significant correlations ($p < .001$) occurred between "Methods and Content" and "Appraisal Process" factors and between "Faculty Members' Roles During Interview Process" and "Faculty Members' Responsibilities" factors.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this study provide new information about the performance appraisal interview in an academic organization. Overall, administrators feel their appraisals are reliable and valid, yet most have had no formal training and are not satisfied with their ability to conduct appraisal interviews. Future research should focus on developing programs to teach administrators interviewing skills. In addition, research should be conducted to determine if heads/chairs conduct voluntary and involuntary exit interviews with faculty members.

Other research might focus on communication style. For example, does an administrator who uses a Tell and Sell method rate precise, dominant, and contentious styles higher than an administrator using a Problem Solving Method? In contrast, does an administrator who uses the Problem Solving method rate open, friendly, and impression leaving styles higher than an administrator using the Tell and Sell method? These, as well as, numerous other

questions focusing on the four interviewing methods and eleven communication styles, could be tested.

Other studies might focus on communication apprehension of interviewers and interviewees. For example, the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) scale could be revised to test interviewing apprehension. Several questions might be addressed: Do interviewers who have low interviewing apprehension utilize different methods than interviewers with high interviewing apprehension? Do interviewees with low apprehension prefer interviewers to use different interviewing methods than interviewees with high apprehension?

Another study might focus on interviewing immediacy. For example, does an interviewer who uses the Tell and Sell method utilize more immediacy cues than interviewers who use other methods? Do interviewees prefer the interviewer to be immediate?

Other appraisal interviewing studies might be conducted to determine the types of questions that are asked by both interviewers and interviewees. For example does an interviewer who uses the Tell and Sell method ask mostly closed-ended questions? In contrast, does the interviewee who uses the Problem-Solving method ask mostly open-ended questions?

Finally, training programs need to be developed to educate administrators and faculty members on the interviewing process, on how to develop an interview guide, on types of introductions and conclusions, and on types of questions that might be used in the appraisal interview.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study have provided the following composite views of administrator and faculty groups:

Administrators. Administrators use a variety of methods in conducting the appraisal interview and use the Problem Solving method most frequently and the Management by Objective (MBO) method least frequently. They also perceive , even though most have not had any formal training in appraisal interviewing, that their appraisal are reliable and valid. Moreover, they have a positive attitude about the appraisal process, attempt to create mutual understanding and appreciate new ideas. Administrators also have positive perceptions of faculty members' performances

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Table 1

Demographics Faculty Administrators

Gender	F	%	Faculty	F	%
Female=	46	69	Full Prof	42	63
Male=	21	31	Associate Prof	25	37

Table 2

Evaluation Areas

Percentage of Satisfaction

Items	%
Conduct appraisal interviews	81.25
Formal training in appraisal interviewing	18.75
Specific evaluation form	62.5
Level of satisfaction	18.75
Reliable	81.75
Valid	87.25

Table 3

Evaluation Areas

Percentage that Rank First and Fourth

Type	First %	Last %
Tell and Sell	19	19
Tell and Listen	19	25
Problem Solving	56	12
MBO	0	62.5

Table 4

Appraisal methods

Percentage that Agree

Items	%
1. I communicate evaluation.	75
2. I stimulate growth and development.	68
3. I persuade faculty members to improve.	56
4. Faculty members profit from criticism.	19
5. I encourage upward communication.	80
6. Praise can create defensiveness.	31
7. I discuss human relations factors.	80
8 I discuss the work environment.	38
9. I discuss the faculty member's current teaching performance evaluation.	94
10. I discuss current research the faculty member completed during the academic year.	88
11. I discuss the faculty member's current service commitment.	81
12. I discuss major accomplishments in meeting all facets of job performance.	88

Table 5

Interviewee Performance

Percentage that Agree

Items	%
1. During the performance appraisal, faculty members request help in handling problems.	56
2. Faculty members ask questions when something is not understood.	75
3. Faculty members take responsibility for failing to meet objectives.	87
4. Faculty members make suggestions aimed at improving their positions.	75
5. Faculty members have materials well organized.	69
6. Faculty members express an interest in the welfare of the department.	35
7. Faculty members put forth a positive attitude toward their abilities.	75
8. Faculty members discuss problems and solutions to problems.	62.5
9. Faculty members provide all information that I desire on a topic.	50
10. Faculty members play an active role in the interview and do a good share of talking.	75

Table 6

Interviewer Behavior

Faculty members: Evaluation of Administrators

Items	Loadings
Factor 1: Methods and Content	
I communicate Evaluation	.69
I encourage upward communication.	.79
I discuss the work environment.	.62
I discuss the faculty member's current teaching performance evaluation	.88
I discuss current research the faculty member completed during the academic year.	.95
I discuss the faculty member's current service commitment.	.94
I discuss major accomplishments in meeting all facets of job performance.	.91
Factor 2: Appraisal Process	
Faculty members profit from criticism.	.84
Praise can create defensiveness.	.80
I discuss human relation factors.	.76

Factor 1 controls for 47 percent of the variance
Factor 2 controls for 23 percent of the variance

Table 7

Interviewee Behavior

Factor Analysis: Heads' Perceptions of Faculty Members

Item	Loadings
Factor l: Faculty Members' Roles During Interview Process	
During the performance appraisal , faculty members request help in handling problems.	.74
Faculty members ask questions when something is not understood.	.79
Faculty members express an interest in their welfare of the department.	.68
Faculty members play an active role in the interview and do a good share of talking	.75
Factor 2: Faculty Members' Responsibilities	
Faculty members take responsibility for failing to meet objectives.	.78
Faculty members have materials well organized.	61
Faculty members provide all information that I desire on all topics.	..85

Factor 1 controls for 43 percent of the variance
Factor 2 controls for 25 percent of the variance